

Clarion

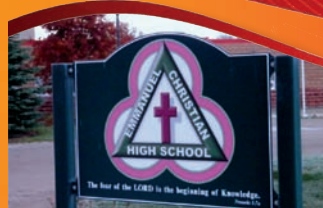
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A School Opens in Ottawa



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An Unheralded Gem

The Church Order is a great and necessary guide when it comes to identifying and implementing the nuts and bolts of church life

Taking things for granted

A particular human trait that we all share is the tendency to take certain things for granted. You may, for example, be driving a certain make of car or truck and think nothing of it, but then someone approaches you and says that they just love the vehicle that you are driving. Or, you may live in a certain area and spend little time considering your surroundings, when out of the blue someone tells you that you are living in a fantastic place. The same sort of thing may happen with many other things, circumstances, and situations. What we deem to be ordinary or plain may attract someone else's attention and interest, even their admiration.

The Church Order

Why do I write about this and bring this to your attention? It is due to the fact that on my trips to China I have been struck repeatedly by this trait or tendency. To be more specific, our church life as members of the Canadian Reformed Churches is governed by the Church Order. In it we find all sorts of instructions, rules, or stipulations about all types of things: the offices of deacon, elder, and minister, the assemblies of consistory, classis, regional synod and general synod, practices relating to worship, sacraments, membership, and discipline. In short, the Church Order is filled with numerous directives, guidelines, and regulations.

Yet how often do we give these things much thought? When was the last time that you turned to the back of the *Book of Praise* and read all or part of the Church Order? Most of us know it is there and we may glance at it once in a while, but for the rest we yawn when it is mentioned. The only time it may receive some special attention is when there is a debate or discussion going on about a certain procedural matter.

You see the Church Order is something that we know exists but which we tend to ignore or even dismiss. Often it is seen as nothing else than part of the almost invisible ecclesiastical furniture or as a necessary evil.

In China

Only not in China! No sooner was this particular document translated into Chinese and made available and it proceeded to garner all sorts of interest and attention. Calls, inquiries, and questions about it were received in large numbers. It generated a great deal of enthusiasm. Why, some churches there no sooner read it and they decided to adopt it. They wanted their church life to be governed by it immediately.

At the same time we were asked to teach it on site. The result was that a large number of church leaders and workers gathered together in a certain place and for a whole week I went through the Church Order with them. The students listened intently, wrote notes diligently, and asked more than a thousand questions. The reception that this material received was nothing short of astounding and it was a rare delight to teach this course.

It should also be added that so enthusiastic was the response that we felt the need to slow things down and offer some cautionary words. After all, the Church Order did not drop out of the sky overnight. It took a long time to formulate and to arrive at its present redaction. As well, it was crafted in a certain historic, social, and religious context. Hence we urged them, and we still keep on telling those who want to embrace and implement it right away, to slow down, study it carefully, identify the main principles, and be very sensitive to their own circumstances and situation.



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Now, you may be wondering as to why the Chinese (and let me add that the enthusiasm for our Church Order is not limited by any means to the Chinese) are so taken with it? A number of factors can be identified.

The guidance factor

The first can be called the *guidance* factor. Imagine yourself, if you can, in a missionary context in which the gospel is being preached, people are coming to faith, gathering together for worship and building a church. How are they going to build it? What basic biblical principles need to be identified? What norms apply? What offices should be instituted? What practices should be adopted?

It is no easy thing to set up a proper church life, as well as identify and implement the necessary principles and practices. It can create an enormous amount of debate. It also tends to generate a lot of disagreement, as well as confusion.

Hence in such a setting it is of great benefit to be able to turn to a document in which so many of the principles are spelled out and so much wisdom is to be found. The Church Order is thus a great and necessary guide when it comes to identifying and implementing the nuts and bolts of church life.

What’s Inside

Issue 6 begins with an editorial about the Church Order. It is a document that may be taken somewhat for granted. What we see here is that new believers and churches, for example the growing church in China, have much enthusiasm for this important piece of work. “Barnabas” takes the time to remind us that something we have long taken for granted is really something that needs to be highly prized.

Dr. Wes Bredenhof continues his series on Liturgical Changes in the Christian Reformed Churches, focusing this installment on the 1970s.

Rev. Reuben Bredenhof writes about the importance of teaching our children about mission and evangelism in his article “How to Raise Prophets.” If we are to teach them about their Christian calling with respect to work and family, this must also be the case with regards to their Christian calling to spread the gospel.

News from the federation includes a report from the opening ceremonies of Ambassadors Christian School in Ottawa, Ontario as well as the annual contributions report from Women’s Savings Action.

Issue 6 also contains regular columns Treasures New and Old and Education Matters, as well as a press release and a new Canticle.

Laura Veenendaal

The brevity factor

The second factor can be called the *brevity* factor. If you look around and want to know how different churches govern their life you are often confronted with thick books containing endless rules and procedures, as well as long mandates for a great number of committees. It is all so detailed and so complicated. As a result it may be difficult to grasp just how exactly this church governs itself.

The same cannot be said about our Church Order. If anything it tends to keep matters brief and concise. It only takes seventy-six articles to describe how we function and operate as Reformed churches. And there is both beauty and attractiveness in that. Indeed, one thing that has always made me hesitant about the Proposed Joint Church Order that the Canadian Reformed and United Reformed Churches have drafted together is that it contains more details and adds a greater degree of complexity. Some people will tell you that “small is beautiful,” but “short is beautiful” too.

The clarity factor

The third aspect that attracts others to our Church Order has to do with what may be called the *clarity* factor. While being short may be a laudable thing when it comes to church government, it alone is not enough. You need to make sure that it is both short and clear.

Something that we have long taken for granted is really something that needs to be highly prized

Here too our Church Order excels. Even a brief look at it soon reveals that it is all organized around only four main headings: offices, assemblies, worship, and discipline. Now, it has to be admitted that what it under these four headings does not say it all; however, most of the main details, the key principles, and the basic practices can be found there. You do not have to consult dense massive tomes or call up great experts to grasp how our churches govern themselves. It is mostly all there, short and clear.

The accountability factor

The fourth factor is the *accountability* factor. In many mission situations the reality is that the church is not ruled by principles but by one person. What emerges is the cult of the strong man, and then the strong man who is accountable to no one.

We have met this repeatedly in China. A certain man goes out, evangelizes, calls people together, and sets up a church. In the process he controls everything. He teaches whatever he likes. He excommunicates those who ask too many questions. He uses the offerings and tithes collected from the members as his own personal assets buying luxury cars and fancy houses.

What is forgotten or not known is that church leadership is never a one man thing but always a group matter. It is not for nothing that Paul instructs Titus to “appoint elders in every town” (Tit 1:5). Paul specifically tells him to appoint more than one. There needs to be a body of elders. There needs to be joint leadership. Leaders too are sinful men who need to be answerable to others.

The biblical factor

Still, when all is said and done what attracts so many believers elsewhere to the Church Order is what may be called the *biblical* factor. In other words, they recognize almost immediately that here we have the outworking of various biblical principles and precepts. The Bible speaks about the offices of pastor, elder, and deacon, and so does the Church Order. The Bible speaks about churches coming together to consult with one another and to help one another, and so does the CO. The Bible deals with worship and sacraments, and so does this document. The Bible also dares to give direction when it comes to discipline, and so does this publication. Whatever the Bible says about the basics of church government can be found back in the Church Order.

Now, it needs to be admitted too that there is not necessarily a Bible verse to support each and every church orderly stipulation. There is such a thing as the practical working out of biblical principle. Take the matter of confessional subscription. There is no Bible text which says that the church should have a special form for this and that the special office-bearers should sign it; however, the need for the church to promote sound doctrine is clear (1 Tim 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; 4:3; Tit 1:9; 2:1).

Suffice it to say then that for various reasons our Church Order has attracted a new following in China and elsewhere. At the same time it should create in us the awareness that something that we have long taken for granted is really something that needs to be highly prized. Our gracious God gives us more treasures than we realize. In the Church Order he gives us a gem!





Christ Prays for a Reprieve



MATTHEW 13:52

"Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing'."
(Luke 23:34a)

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The Lord Jesus spoke seven sayings from the cross. The first was a prayer for those responsible for having him crucified. Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." It was a prayer for God's covenant people, a prayer that he would not cause fire to come and consume them, as happened to Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10). A prayer that the earth would not swallow them up, as happened to Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Num 16). A prayer that God would show mercy and be long-suffering when dealing with those who crucified his dearly loved Son.

The people of God certainly deserved his wrath to be poured out upon them. When Pilate examined the charges brought against Jesus, he found Jesus not guilty of any of them. He knew Israel's leaders had handed Jesus over because of envy. He tried to secure Jesus' release, yet the people cried, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate washed his hands in front of them, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood." The people responded: "Let his blood be on us and our children" (Matt 27:25). They took responsibility for Christ's death. If Christ was wrongly condemned, then they were guilty of murder, and would deserve the penalty for murder. They and their children would come under God's curse.

Although the people are responsible for shedding his blood, Christ prays for them. He does so because they don't know what they're doing. The people were unaware that they were crucifying the Lord of glory (1 Cor 2:8), the Prince of life (Acts 3:15), the

Messiah whom God sent to redeem them. If they had knowingly and willfully put Jesus to death, their condemnation of the Saviour would have led to their eternal death. Yet because they were blind and ignorant, Christ prays for them.

Why didn't Christ just forgive them? There were times during his ministry when he forgave sinners. So why pray for the Father to forgive them? The primary reason is that before forgiveness can be given, there needs to be repentance. The Scriptures teach that forgiveness requires an acknowledgment of sin, and repentance from it. The people who crucified the Lord couldn't receive forgiveness until they recognized their sin and repented from it.

From this we see what Christ is really praying for. He prays for a reprieve, for the Father to withhold judgment from those who crucified him. He prays that his murderers may come to see that they crucified the Messiah. Christ is asking his Father to give them time to realize their sins, to confess them, and to repent from them. He is praying for time, so God's people may come to know him as their Saviour and King.

God answered Jesus' prayer. He didn't immediately bring judgment from heaven on those who crucified his Son. On Pentecost, Peter preached about how God's people, with the help of wicked men, put Jesus to death by nailing him to a cross (Acts 2:23). Yet God raised him from the dead and made him Lord and Christ. Hearing this, the people were cut to the heart and asked what they should do. Peter encouraged

them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins.

Acts 2 says that on Pentecost, many repented and believed. About 3000 people were saved on that day alone, a number that quickly grew to about 5000. And Acts 6:7 records that "a large number of priests became obedient to the faith." Not just the common people, but many of the priests who formerly opposed Jesus came to the faith! So we see that the Father heard Christ's prayer, and in his grace he brought many to repentance and forgiveness.

God's grace is still being applied to us today. When we fall into sin, God is merciful and long-suffering. Instead of immediately punishing us and bringing the judgment we deserve, God gives time to repent. Our calling is to recognize our sins, to humble ourselves before God in repentance, and to seek forgiveness in the blood of our Saviour. We may have loved ones who have strayed from God's Word and will; while they still live, we may pray for them. There are also many in society who walk in darkness. Let it be our prayer that our merciful Father would grant them a reprieve, so they have time to repent and believe the gospel.

The glorious message of Good Friday is that Jesus Christ died on the cross for the sins of all his people. His first words spoken from the cross show his willingness to forgive our sins. God does not desire the death of the sinner, but that he turns from his wicked way and lives! (Ezek 33:11; 2 Pet 3:9)





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Liturgical Change in the Christian Reformed Church (1964-1985) Part 3 of 5

Thus far, we've seen how CRC Synods in the 1960s came to emphasize the dialogical character of Christian worship. This emphasis appeared without any corresponding reference to what the Three Forms of Unity state about worship. This sets the stage for further developments into the 1970s and 1980s.

Synod 1973 – Pushing the Boundaries

In some ways the report of the Liturgical Committee to Synod 1973 was business as usual. For instance, it contained a revision of the Form for the Baptism of Children. However, the remainder of the report attempted to take some steps "forward." Within the report was a sub-report on the second service. The Committee felt obliged to produce such a report because of continued pressure from churches which "keep on asking questions about the place and possibilities of this service in the whole of the Christian life." The Committee went on to state that much of what the 1968 report concluded is as applicable to the second service as to the morning service.

The report contained theological, historical, and pastoral reasons for maintaining a second service. The theological and historical sections were unremarkable. It was in the pastoral section that some new elements appeared. First, the report emphasized that the second service must "meet the needs of believers living in today's world." This led to a consideration of the "need for diversity amidst a diversity of needs." In this framework, the instructional character of the second service was reaffirmed, but the Heidelberg Catechism was seen as inadequate for the task. It was alleged that, by itself, the Catechism could not meet the needs of contemporary church-goers. Said the report, ". . . the Heidelberg Catechism can still serve as

a starting point and an outline, but churches should have the courage to go beyond it and speak with a contemporary voice." Thus the Catechism sermons should occasionally be shelved in favour of a sermon on something more immediately relevant.

However, the report went on to note, the pulpit does not lend itself very well to instruction on relevant issues. Thus we come to this statement: "We therefore propose that instruction from the pulpit be focused on fundamentals and that this instruction be augmented with panels, interviews, audio-visuals, and group discussion possibly held in another part of the building after the service." It is evident, also from the Synod's reaction to this proposal (which we will see momentarily), that the last clause about meeting in another part of the building only applies to the group discussion. Here the Liturgical Committee was pushing the outer boundaries with their notion of what a teaching service can entail.

The report went further. The second service, they said, can be more than a teaching service. Ecumenical services can also be slotted in here: "A real blessing could be obtained in an occasional coming together of various congregations in and around a worship service." Furthermore, they also proposed a diaconal service in which, for instance, "an occasional CRWRC [Christian Reformed World Relief Committee] film could be shown." There could be also be special category services directed towards the youth or the aged. Finally, there could also be an evangelistic service, for drawing in outsiders, but also because "we cannot blithely assume that all of our members on the records are converted people, true, practicing children of God."

Through this report, one can detect a development. There is a difference from 1968. The earlier report

spoke emphatically about the dialogical character of worship. The 1973 report mentions nothing about that. It seems that the door was open and the time was right for introducing some innovations. They did this wishing to meet human "needs." There was no concern for what God would have us do in worship and certainly no consideration given to the principles of worship found in the Three Forms of Unity. Indeed, the Heidelberg Catechism itself came under attack for being out of date. Catechism preaching lost its preeminent place not only in favour of different, more "modern" forms of teaching, but also in exchange for ecumenical, diaconal, special category, and evangelistic services. All this because human "needs" were regarded as chief above all.

The Liturgical Committee recommended that its report on the second service be commended to the churches for their "consideration, reflection, and guidance." Synod 1973 decided to "refer this report to the churches for their consideration and reflection." However, they were quite hesitant, for they stated in the observations that "we believe there are parts of this report that allow for types of services which may be in violation of the Church Order." On the basis of the CRC church order, the Synod warned against ecumenical services. They also saw the pressure this report was placing on the preaching of the Word. This observation led to the second recommendation:

That Synod remind the churches that whatever practices are followed with respect to the second service, the consistories exercise care to observe Articles 51-55 of the Church Order, particularly Article 54a which states, "In the worship services the Minister of the Word shall officially explain and apply Holy Scripture."

Thus we can see that Synod 1973 was not prepared to go as far as the Liturgical Committee would have liked. There was still a conservative element in the CRC which held back a wholesale recommendation or adoption of the liturgical innovations found in this report. Yet the report was still sent out to the churches. . . .

Synods 1977-79 – A Lull in the Action

Very little happened in these years. The revision of liturgical forms was ongoing, but we do not find substantial reports such as were presented in 1968 and 1973. One item of note was that the Liturgical Committee recommended in 1977 that a liturgical education committee be appointed for the purpose of "motivating and instructing the membership of the

Christian Reformed Church in the history, theology, and practice of Reformed liturgy and music." This recommendation was adopted. However, by 1979 it was becoming clear that the work of this committee was redundant and it was disbanded.

Another item of interest at Synod 1977 was the movement towards a "Contemporary Testimony." The Three Forms of Unity were described as "historic creeds" which "do not adequately address themselves to certain facets of the church's life today. . . ." This development may be related insofar as the Reformed confessions were sidelined in the earlier discussions concerning principles of worship.

Synod 1978 saw more proposed changes to the liturgical forms and also efforts to revise the Psalter Hymnal. Otherwise there does not seem to have been anything substantial taking place with the Liturgical Committee at this time.

Synod 1979 was not much different, other than the fact that a form was introduced for the ordination of evangelists. There was also a situation involving Rev. A. Hoksbergen. He objected to the Form for Excommunication, since he believed that no single church or denomination may excommunicate from Christ's kingdom. He also maintained that excommunication ought to take place at a congregational meeting rather than before the eyes of the world in a public worship service. In his view, excommunication would then consist solely of excommunication from the fellowship of the CRC. From the Acts it would appear that Synod 1979 did not give much, if any, consideration to these objections of Rev. Hoksbergen. The Form for Excommunication remained.

We can also take note of a remark in the Psalter Hymnal Revision Committee report. This committee was asked by Synod 1978 to report on principles for music in the church. The report first reproduced the 1953 "Statement of Principle for Music in the Church." The report then proposed to modify this statement. The modification began as follows: "The music of the church should be appropriate for worship – that is, it should be liturgical and have aesthetic integrity. The music of worship should serve the dialogue between God and his people." What's noteworthy here is the mention of dialogue again – something which first appeared in 1968. It comes back here in the Psalter Hymnal report and it will return again, as we shall see in the next instalment.

Next time: Synod 1985 — Let's Go Dancing.





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How to Raise Prophets

Revised from a presentation at a membership meeting for Covenant Christian School in London, Ontario

The man mowing the lawn

As a general rule, I'm hesitant to tell stories about my kids. But I have one anecdote that needs to be shared: it was on a sunny Sunday, back in the summer, and we were leaving for church in the afternoon. Pulling out of the driveway, one of our little girls saw a next-door neighbour busily mowing his lawn. Being a good legalist (like most kids are), our daughter piped up from the back of the van, "He shouldn't mow his lawn on Sunday. He should go to church." I replied by saying something like, "Oh, but he doesn't go to church." At which she replied, quite matter-of-factly, "Then you should tell him about the gospel, Dad." Embarrassed silence, then: "You're right, I should!"

That leads well into the topic: our children, and evangelism and mission. Briefly put, we understand *evangelism* to be the sharing of the gospel within our own communities; and *mission* to be the sending of gospel ministers and workers to other communities. Are these really things that our children need to know about? If so, what can they be taught about doing mission and evangelism? And how can they be involved in it?

Knowing our calling

Let's first speak about the missionary calling of the church. Because before we can assert what our children must know and do, we have to be clear on it ourselves, as adults. This may even be the main point. If evangelism isn't something that we care much about, or put into practice ourselves, then we can hardly expect it of our children, right? So what is the task that Christ has given us as church with respect to the spreading of his Word, the gospel of salvation?

A text everyone probably turns to in their minds is Matthew 28:19-20, those words of Christ to his disciples just before he ascended into heaven. You know them well: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." And it is a key text. In it we hear the missionary calling of the church clearly assigned. But is that our only text when it comes to the topic? If it all came down to just one passage, maybe some would try to explain it away. They could say, "Well, Jesus didn't mean that for us today – he meant it for the twelve apostles." Or we could say, "Fine, but there are many other things that we have to be busy with too, besides spreading the Word."

But thankfully the mandate to share the gospel isn't revealed in just one passage. It's revealed time and again in Scripture. It's hinted at already in the Old Testament, and then becomes part of the fabric of the New Testament: that the people of Christ must be busy with this work of going, making disciples, teaching them everything the Saviour commanded.

Hastening the end

Without getting into many texts, a bit of theology can illustrate how essential this is to the Christian faith. As believers, we all look forward to the return of Christ from heaven, as judge and Lord. It's one of the articles of our confession, and something we long for. But why hasn't He come back yet? Why is it 2012 and we're still waiting?

Someone might reply, "Well, it's obviously not God's time yet. He has set a day in his eternal counsel, and that day hasn't arrived." Which is true. But there's another reason we're still waiting – a more immediate reason, if you will. The reason Christ hasn't returned is because the missionary task of the church isn't yet done! There's still gospel-spreading to be carried out.

Peter says this in his second letter where he's talking about the approaching judgment, but also about how God seems to be delaying. Peter explains this by saying, "The Lord is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (3:9). Hear those words: God is being patient, and he wants all to repent.

Yes, the great day is certainly coming. It's what we pray for, and find comfort in. But before it can arrive, God wants the full number safely assembled. He has a timetable for this world, and it's a timetable linked directly to the gathering of Christ's church. This truth is placed front and centre in last article of the Belgic Confession. Speaking of the last judgment, we confess there, "When the time, ordained by the Lord but unknown to all creatures, has come *and the number of the elect is complete*, our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven" (Art. 37).

What is the task that Christ has given us as church with respect to the spreading of his Word?

God has ordained a time for Christ's return. It's a time unknown to all but him. But this is what we do know about the day of glory: it'll come, as soon as the church is fully gathered through the Word and Spirit. That day will come once the gospel has gone out to our neighbours, and gone out to all nations.

The ABCs of Christian living

This underlines for us just how fundamental are evangelism and mission to the church's calling. It's not a subsidiary point in the grand scheme of things; it's not an optional activity, to be pursued only if we have the time and resources. No, it's fundamental! And now to the consequence: it underlines how we need to build an awareness of this calling in our children, to instil in them the need to tell others about Jesus Christ.

For when it comes to teaching our children, we don't hold off telling them about some aspects of their Christian calling, do we? No, we put it all out there in its proper time and place, the ABCs of Christian living. We tell our children about their calling to labour diligently with God's gifts, whether as a carpenter or a homemaker or an accountant. We tell them about their

calling in the church, to help the needy and support the ministry. We tell our children about their calling with respect to family: the importance of choosing a godly spouse, the blessing of having children of their own one day, and so on. All this and more we share with our children because we know it's essential for them. We want it to become part of their thinking.

If we tell them all that, then we must also speak to our children about mission and evangelism. If this work is so integral to what it means to be a Christian in these last days, it's not something to start teaching only later. We start now.



“Just don’t break anything. . .”

So how can we enable and encourage our children to carry out this high calling? Let’s start with what is (perhaps) easier: deeds. Today, many of our fellow citizens will recognize that there are good things that Christians do. We try to be honest in business. We try to be kind to people on our street. We value faithfulness in marriage. We place an importance on hard work. We take a different attitude toward suffering and even death.

Now, sometimes the quiet life of a regular Christian seems to attract very little attention at all. But at other times – and probably many of us have experienced this – unbelievers can’t ignore it. When they look at Christians and they see stable homes, and friendly people, and active churches, they’re struck by this testimony. It causes people to wonder, at least momentarily: Why the difference with these people? What’s the reason for this unexpected kindness, this joy?

There’s still gospel-spreading to be carried out

That’s what we call living prophetically. Prophecy is pointing to the One who has called us and saved us. This is making known the message of the gospel by the character of your life. A godly walk of life isn’t just capable of getting compliments or inviting curious questions. Through the working of the Holy Spirit, we confess in the Catechism, a godly walk of life is capable of winning someone for Christ!

This then, is one key lesson to teach our children: that God has put each of us in a certain place and position in this society and world. We all have neighbours. There’s that family across the street. There’s the people we come across in the grocery store. There’s the relationships we all have already, and many more potential relationships.

Remembering that, consider what Paul said to the Colossians. He instructs, “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity” (4:5). When interacting with the people around us, our eyes need to be open to the opportunities that God presents. Too often we don’t see how a simple deed of kindness across the back fence or a little gesture in the checkout line can speak volumes to someone else. But God tells us for a reason: “Be wise in the way

you act toward outsiders, and make the most of every opportunity.”

If that’s true for us, it must also be true for our children. People notice our kids! Why, there’s something about children that almost magnetically draws the attention of bystanders. Children’s behaviour, their character, their interactions with one another and with Mom and Dad – all will be closely regarded. What are these children like? Are they kind? Are they respectful? Are they self-controlled? Are they obedient?

Sometimes our greatest fear when going out is that our children will embarrass us. If we’re out in public, we just want them to behave. Well-known is the last-minute checklist of family by-laws: “Inside voices, please! Mind your manners. And try not to break anything!” But we can set the bar even higher. It’s not too much to instil in children the understanding that they are ambassadors of Christ, wherever they go. Even as children, they bring a message from him into this world.

Tell the next generation

That’s the deeds part – which, we said, is perhaps easier. What about words? To what extent should we train our children to speak of the gospel? And just how much can we expect them to witness to the people in their neighbourhood?

Now, some will say we shouldn’t have separate Christian schools for this reason. Our children shouldn’t be “segregated,” as it were, but they should be in the public schools so that there they can evangelize their classmates. Being together for six or seven hours a day provides almost endless opportunities to share the gospel. But this environment would probably put an awful lot of pressure on our children. Are they really able to do it, particularly in educational settings that are increasingly un-Christian, or even anti-Christian?

It’s not too much to instil in children the understanding that they are ambassadors of Christ, wherever they go

But there’s still the question: In our schools and homes and churches, are we preparing our children for a life of remaining segregated from the world, now and always? Or are we aiming to make them into “missionaries” for Christ and prophets who will gladly

speak of his Name? It should be the latter. Maybe not at once, for missionaries need to be trained! But if we impress on them even from a young age that this is their prophetic calling, it can be something they grow into. By the time they mature – having been equipped with a scriptural and confessional knowledge, as well as a discerning spirit – we pray that they'll view sharing the gospel as fundamental to being a Christian.

Things to be done

Along the way, we can do a few things. First, we can teach them about the mission and evangelism that are already ongoing. Too often, our missionaries and mission workers are forgotten people. "Pay and pray," we like to say when it comes to mission. The attention falls especially on the former, where we get "assessed" or write our annual cheque, and consider it done. And paying is necessary! To better integrate a missionary awareness in the classroom and the home, we might train our children to give of their own material resources in support of the spread of the gospel. Sponsoring a child who attends a mission school is one way to put a personal face on this work.

Children pay attention to those things that you're passionate about

The latter aspect of that duo, "praying," can surely also be improved. To facilitate meaningful prayer, we can tell our children what the countries and communities are like where missionaries do their work. We can talk about the many challenges that missionaries face. And while you're at it, remember to pray for those in your own life who don't know the gospel. Pray for your next-door neighbours, or Daddy's co-workers, or the many others in our land who don't know Christ and his salvation. That example of praying for the lost further underlines to children just how important is the spread of the Word.

A second part of training our children for sharing the gospel is teaching them the gospel. Such instruction already receives much emphasis at school, in the home, and at church. But evangelism can be seen as another good reason to impart a solid understanding of the faith. Learning the Scriptures isn't just for their own salvation, it's for the salvation of others! Children need to understand that without knowing the Lord Jesus, people are utterly lost.

Church News

Accepted the call to the Chatham, Ontario CanRC:

Rev. D. De Boer

of Dunnville, Ontario CanRC

Accepted the call to Yarrow, British Columbia CanRC:

Rev. R. Eikelboom

of the Free Reformed Church of Launceston, Tasmania.

Declined to call to Chilliwack, BC CanRC:

Rev. J. Poppe

of the Redeemer CanRC, Winnipeg, Manitoba

When they have that understanding, children can be very bold when speaking about the gospel – often more so than adults. But while they may earnestly love God, and even fear for their neighbour's eternal salvation, it's not always easy for kids to express that. Therefore we need to spend time giving them the basics of salvation, so that they're prepared to speak. What can they say to others about who God is? Who Jesus Christ is? What can they say about sin? About creation? This is giving your children the tools to witness, so they can do it with confidence.

Things to be modelled

And thirdly, we all know the saying, "Monkey see, monkey do." As was said at the beginning, we can't ask others to do something that we ourselves aren't willing to. If Dad won't share the gospel with the neighbour, then we've got nothing to say about him mowing the lawn on Sunday. No, our children are only going to do what we do. We lead by example, and show children that we mean what we say.

This is something every teacher knows: children pay attention to those things that you're passionate about. If you're droning on about some topic, you shouldn't be surprised to see a lot of eyes glazing over. But if you have an excitement for it, they'll not only pay attention but remember. Parents must know this if we're trying to impart a zeal for mission and evangelism to our children. Show that it's real to you. Show that it's important to you.

Sharing the gospel isn't easy. Even when we know all this – that it's part of the church's calling, and our responsibility as believers – we struggle with it. Instead of fearing God, we fear man, so it's hard to work up the courage to speak. But our God in Christ is gracious and powerful. May we learn to rely on him more and more, and may we likewise teach this trust to our children!



A School Opens in Ottawa



Our God and King” under the direction of our music teacher, Elizabeth Smith. The chairman of the board, Chris Van Popta, offered thanks and praise to God our Father for his grace and providence in turning what was but a dream in the mid-90s into reality for Jubilee Church. On behalf of the board, Chris officially thanked all of the volunteers and their dedication to the operation of the school. This group also includes Pastor George (church history), Karyn Schutten (art), and Elizabeth Smith (music). He then formally introduced members of the staff: Heidi Feenstra - our esteemed and much loved teacher of eight students, grades 1-5; Sara Lüdwig- a fully qualified and professional French language instructor who ensures that French is a core daily subject in the curriculum; Ellie Buist, the administrator, who continually strives to add a level of professionalism that goes above and beyond expectations. The students of ACS were invited to come forward to assist Ellie in the official ribbon cutting ceremony for the grand opening of their school!

How grand the opening! Ambassadors Christian School had been operating in Ottawa for some two months and it was time to celebrate with family and friends. And so we gathered at the school on November 12, 2011, where we were welcomed by Ellie Buist, our MC for the evening. ACS’s first teacher, Heidi Feenstra, proudly led her charges into the hall and our French teacher, Sara Lüdwig, directed the students in a song of praise to God: “*Que La Gloire du Seigneur.*” The audience responded with the singing of Psalm 139 – “His hand will guide us, his right hand will hold us fast,” the school’s theme text. Our pastor, George Van Popta, echoed this with the reading of Psalm 116 that speaks of our close walk with the Lord. He pointed out how the school is imbuing our youth with a Reformed Christian worldview that will help them to negotiate this life in which they experience both prosperity and adversity.

After opening prayer, the children gathered around the piano where they sang “All Creatures of





We were then treated to a wonderful slide show that was put together by our teacher and featured interviews with the children who spoke about why they enjoyed ACS. What a heart-warming testimony for proud parents, grandparents, and supporters alike! A number of congratulatory letters from other Canadian Reformed schools were then read. We were very pleased to have a number of guests from Southern Ontario offer their perspective on ACS:

these included Frank Lüdwig, principal of John Calvin School Smithville, one the oldest schools in the CRTA and grandfather of two ACS children; Arthur Kingma, vice-principal of Emmanuel Christian school and Heidi's father; Everett De Jong, executive director of Harvest Endowment Foundation, an organization that provides our schools with additional funds on a regular basis.

The evening was closed with the singing of "Great is thy Faithfulness," followed by some remarks by Ed Lüdwig, secretary of the board. He commented on how the board is accepting the torch from the previous generation who, almost fifty years ago, established Reformed schools in Canada. After closing prayer, the children sang a benediction, "Que La Grâce de Dieu." It is our prayer that our children, who by God's grace are living members of the church of Christ, will learn to live as godly ambassadors to their peers, their community and their country. We are truly grateful to all members of the broader Canadian Reformed community for their support. A special thank you goes to Christine VanHalen-Faber, principal of Covenant Teachers College, for encouraging us in the very early days and to Diane Jonker for sharing her pioneering experiences as a teacher of a small school. For more information on Ambassadors Christian School, please visit www.AmbassadorsChristianSchool.ca or call the chairman at 613-839-0374.





Rev. George van Popta
is minister of the Jubilee
Canadian Reformed Church
at Ottawa, Ontario
gvanpopta@gmail.com

Mostly Canticles

Psalm 151 is the name given to a short psalm found in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, but not in the Hebrew Masoretic text upon which our English translation is based. For many years it was thought to have been a Greek composition, but it is now known from the Dead Sea scrolls, discovered in 1947, that this psalm did in fact exist in Hebrew and was a part of the psalter used by the Qumran community. Petrus Dathenus included a Dutch version of it as Hymn 13 out of 14 in his 1562 Psalter where it is set to the tune of Genevan 19.

It lasted many years in the Dutch Psalters and is still found in the songbooks of some Dutch churches. The older ones among us may remember Oma singing it. It has been set here to Genevan 78 since the last verses/ stanza of Psalm 78 cover much of what "Psalm 151" is about. The late Rev. G. van Rongen wrote about this song in *Una Sancta* Volume 53.

Psalm 151

1. I was the young - est one a - mong my broth - ers,
the small - est son be - long - ing to my fa - ther.
I tend - ed sheep, both ewes and lambs I pas - tured
and bound their wounds when - ev - er they were in - jured.
With my own hands I made a psal - te - ry
with which I sang and praised God's ma - jes - ty.

2. And who will tell the Lord about his servant?
The Lord himself, for he to me has listened.
He sent his prophet to my father's household
to summon me and take me from the sheepfold.
With precious oil he called me to my task.
Anointing-oil he poured out from a flask.
3. My elder brothers were so tall and handsome.
The prophet thought he could predict the outcome:
"One of these fine men is the Lord's anointed!"
or so he thought, but he was disappointed.
For they did not please God – no, not at all.
I was the one whom God, the Lord, did call.
4. I went to meet the blasphemous Philistine
who cursed me by the idols of his nation.
I drew his sword, Goliath I beheaded.
I killed the one whom all the people dreaded.
I took away disgrace from Israel.
Let praises to our God in heaven swell.

News from the Women's Savings Action

Contributions received

With thankfulness we may report that during the past year a total of \$32,439.85 was collected. This includes a donation of \$880.97 from the Free Reformed Church of Launceston in Tasmania, Australia. Every year again we are amazed to see how all the amounts, big and small, add up to one large amount, making it possible as Women's Savings Action to provide the main source of income for the purchase of books and periodicals for our Seminary.

Convocation 2011

Now and then someone may ask if it still makes sense for the Women's Savings Action to present the Seminary with funds to purchase more hard copy books in our electronic age. As we pointed out at the Convocation, electronic resources definitely have a place in a library, but not to the exclusion of hard copy books. We are very grateful that your enthusiasm for our unique means of raising funds for the library continues into this electronic age. And so we were able to present the principal of the Seminary with a pledge for \$35,000.

A new secretary

Every year usually sees some changes in the representatives. This year also sees a change in our board. Janet Van Vliet has been found willing to take over the secretarial duties from Dinie Gootjes. Thanks, Dinie, for your contribution to the Women's Savings Action! Janet, a hearty welcome! Your willingness to serve on the board is greatly appreciated! We wish you the Lord's blessing as you take on your task as secretary and we look forward to working with you.

Thank you very much!

At the annual Library Committee Meeting, which is also attended by the Women's Savings Action, the

librarian, Margaret Van der Velde, mentioned that a survey of the students indicated that the library fulfills their needs, with few students actually using other libraries to complete their assignments. Over the years the library has grown to a very respectable collection with well over 30,000 titles in a variety of languages covering a large range of subjects. Under the blessing of the Lord, the dedicated efforts of all those involved with the Women's Savings Action have helped to make this a reality.

Our sincere appreciation goes to those of you who have done and do the work (the organizing, the collecting, the counting) – the representatives and the volunteers – whether you have “retired,” whether you continue to take on this task (some of you for many years already), or whether you have just joined our ranks! Without your faithful participation and dedicated efforts we would not be able to carry on.

But of course, there would be no work to do, if you did not continue to give your donations. And so our heartfelt gratitude to all of you for your contributions! Materially the Lord has blessed each one of us differently. Whatever amount you give, be assured that it is received with thankfulness. If perchance you or your congregation did not make a donation, please join us in the privilege of supporting the work of training for the ministry in this way.

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Women's Savings Action

Contributions for the year July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011
(With comparative figures for the previous year)

Congregation	2011	2010	Congregation	2011	2010
Abbotsford	1430.00	1385.00	Guelph	465.30	395.00
Aldergrove	1410.00	1240.00	Hamilton/Cornerstone	1767.70	1864.25
Ancaster	863.66	746.98	Hamilton/Providence	238.45	170.00
Attercliffe	799.00	1282.00	Houston	--	251.00
Barrhead	170.00	205.00	Kerwood	165.00	660.00
Brampton	320.85	117.00	Langley	2015.00	2312.00
Burlington/Ebenezer	1210.65	1225.70	Lincoln	505.00	740.00
Burlington/Fellowship	370.00	230.00	London	--	--
Burlington/Waterdown	--	670.00	Lynden	346.62	512.77
Calgary	689.32	621.73	Neerlandia	--	360.00
Carman/East	505.00	574.00	Orangeville	300.00	210.60
Carman/West	328.00	244.50	Ottawa	150.00	190.00
Chatham	502.50	669.85	Owen Sound	--	270.00
Chilliwack	730.00	870.00	Smithers	--	391.85
Cloverdale	--	--	Smithville	2133.50	1634.00
Coaldale	700.00	815.00	Spring Creek	135.00	361.00
Dunnville/Wainfleet	--	--	St. Albert	1525.00	1470.00
Edmonton/Immanuel	3215.00	2830.00	Surrey	485.00	845.00
Edmonton/Providence	1152.00	20.00	Taber	210.00	--
Elora	477.00	412.00	Toronto	146.00	414.50
Fergus/North	146.00	232.93	Vernon	585.00	436.00
Fergus/South(Maranatha)	636.50	535.50	Willoughby Heights	1155.00	1245.00
Flamborough	175.00	377.00	Winnipeg/Grace	520.00	701.00
Glanbrook	951.85	874.58	Winnipeg/Redeemer	760.00	940.00
Grand Rapids	344.19	490.55	Yarrow	335.00	310.00
Grand Valley	209.22	229.79	Australia	880.97	
Grassie	280.57	438.20	Royalties Selles	--	--
Total Collected				32439.85	34021.28





CRTA Convention, October 27, 28: God is Good

The day dawned to the hustle and bustle of people in Maranatha Christian School's building. The executive of the CRTA set out registration information and readied themselves for the arrival of many teachers to the annual CRTA Teachers' Convention, hosted by Emmanuel Christian High School in Fergus, Ontario. The ladies in the kitchen set up the coffee pots, set out the mugs and glasses, prepared the breads and fruits, and nigh to 100 teachers were greeted with the pleasant aromas of fresh coffee, raisin bread, and croissants.

The convention was officially opened by the CRTA Executive chair, Mr. Peter DeBruin. After his words of welcome and his prayer for God's blessing, he turned the floor to Mrs. Caroline VanGrootheest, who led us in some singing, setting the tone for the day. We also enjoyed the accompanying piano at the hands of Mr. Stephen DeBoer.

The floor was then passed on to Rev. G. Bijlsma, the URC pastor of Brantford, Ontario, who expounded on the theme of the convention, "God is Good;" the title of his address being "Teaching the Next Generation the Goodness of God." God has given us, he said, the message of his love to bring to the students. As teachers we all know about "good classes of students" and "bad classes of students." We were challenged to remember that the Father send his Son to cover the sins of "the worst possible class ever." This knowledge should be the fountain from which our dealings with our students emanate. Psalm 78 was the basis for Rev. Bijlsma's presentation. Our students need to hear of God's grace in the lives of his people, and also how that grace is evident today. That is part of our task as educators.

After a question-answer session and some singing, we moved on to the first workshops. Workshops offers included: Reaching Out to the Unloved Teenager, Do you Trust the Green Machine?, Character Formation & Schooling, Differentiated Instruction – Literature Stations, Promethean Interactive Whiteboards,

Mentoring Student Teachers, Inspiring Young Creative Writers: 6 + 1 Traits (AM and PM), and Dyslexia: Ability or Disability (AM and PM).

Of the above, I attended the Whiteboard presentation. It was noted that this technology was little utilized in our schools. The ability to interact and have materials designed to assist students in finding solutions gave some good arguments in favour of the usage of such technologies. Other options are also available, but of these, Promethean is an industry leader.

After a wonderful lunch and some more singing we returned to the classrooms for our second session of workshops. During this session, the following were offered: Missions and Christian Schools, Drama in Christian Schools, Off to the Fair!, Technology for Teachers, "Stretch" into this Phys. Ed. Session, and the continuations of the two session presentations.

During this session I attended the presentation on Technology for Teachers. The participants were introduced to word processing, spreadsheets, and, primarily, presentation software. The participants were walked through the building of a basic presentation and most had a functional PowerPoint® presentation at the end of the session.

Friday dawned but without as much bustle, as most of the participants were returning for the second day. We did welcome the staff of Guido de Brès as they were unable to attend Thursday. This morning began with Scripture and prayer, as well as singing, led by Mr. Ronn VanAndel. He also introduced our speaker for the morning, Dr. B. Faber (Redeemer University College), who spoke under the title "The Medium is the Message: Speaking with Grace in the Classroom." This speech was also an extension of the Convention theme. The message was based on James 3. We are, as teachers, required to speak graciously. . . taming the tongue. We all have regrets of the tongue as we all have moments to savor. Dr. Faber mentioned that we do not need *politically correct Reformed language*, but our lives as



well as our speech need to be characterized by the love of God. The final word is that we must speak the truth in love. Dr. Faber was found willing to adapt his speech for publication in the next Education Matters column of *Clarion*.

After a discussion of this keynote address which focused on the use of sarcasm and irony, where sarcasm was defined as being negative while irony (often considered sarcasm) could be used positively or rhetorically, we moved into the balance of the day.

The third workshop session included the topics: Overcoming Anxiety and Relationships, Let's Celebrate in Song that *God is Good*, Reaching Out to the Unloved Teenager (second time), Digging into the Past: Planning a History Fair!, Science Olympics: New Horizons of Discovery, The Nifty Nine to Know and Use (AM and PM), and Using Assessment to Celebrate and Support Students' Early Reading Success.

During this session I attended "Let's Celebrate in Song that *God is Good*." This was a presentation encouraging all schools present, upon returning to their staffrooms, to promote the idea of a Choralfest. Previously, Choralfests were performed in 1996, 1998, and 2000. During these events students from participating schools traveled for a day to Hamilton to perform individual school songs and mass choir songs for the audience as well as for recording purposes. The proposed performance date of this Choralfest would be May 2013. The participants asked a lot of questions and showed a great deal of excitement and support for this venture. Let us hope that their respective staffs feel the same.

A brief CRTA business meeting took place at this time. Being before lunch made it more desirable to get the administrative jobs done in a timely manner!

After another hearty lunch, our afternoon session began, offering Christians and Politics: Is God Good for Everyone? Literature: Guided Confrontation, Creative Fitness, What Can I Teach for Art Today?, Grade level Discussion: Grade 5/6, Grade level Discussion, 7/8, Early Reading Success: Developing and Using Leveled Book Collections in Your Classroom, Grades 1 -3, as well as the double sessions from the morning.

During this session I attended Creative Fitness. This active workshop got our blood pumping with fitness activities that were definitely creative, making fitness more fun than simple stretches and activities in a guided class session. Over 100 sample games were shared, and, I can speak from my own classroom experience, the ones I tried work wonderfully.

The closing of the conference focused once again on the grace of God and his goodness in granting us this grace. While most teachers travelled back to their homes, the ECHS and MCS staffs enjoyed some fellowship while returning the school back to educational order. Throughout this convention, we certainly experienced that God is Good!

For more information check out the website at www.theCRTA.com.

The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association East. Anyone wishing to respond to an article written or willing to write an article is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion or to Arthur Kingma abkingma@kwic.com.



**Press Release of Classis Northern Ontario,
February 23, 2012**

On behalf of the convening church of Fergus-Maranatha, Rev. D.G.J. Agema called the brothers to order. He read Philippians 1:1-11, we sang Psalm 122:2, and Rev. Agema led in prayer.


The delegates of the church at Elora reported that all the churches were properly represented. Classis was declared constituted. Rev. J. VanWoudenberg served as chairman, Rev. C.J. VanderVelde as vice-chairman, and Rev. M.H. VanLuik as clerk. Rev. VanWoudenberg mentioned several items of memorabilia. The agenda was adopted.

The churches answered the first two questions according to Article 44 CO in the affirmative. Two churches needed the advice of Classis. Advice was given.

The documents pertaining to Rev. D.G.J. Agema's release from Fergus-Maranatha were found to be in good order. Classis approbated the call to Rev. Agema from the Living Word Church at Guelph. Classis appointed Rev. C.J. VanderVelde as counselor for Fergus-Maranatha.

The church at Fergus-North will convene the next classis on June 22, 2012. The suggested officers are: Rev. Agema – chairman, Rev. VanLuik – vice-chairman, and Rev. VanWoudenberg – clerk.

Question Period was held. Censure according to Article 34 CO was not necessary. The Acts were adopted and the Press Release was approved. We sang Psalm 122:3 and Rev. VanWoudenberg led in prayer. Classis was declared closed.

C.J. VanderVelde
Vice-chairman at that time 



**Clarion
Advertisements**

Advertisements:

Announcements of Weddings, Anniversaries (with Open House) should be submitted six weeks in advance.

BIRTHS

All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the peace of your children. Isaiah 54:13

The Lord in His infinite love and grace has blessed us with a child in His time. It is with great joy that we announce the birth of our 5th child

CALEB HENRY

Born on December 29th, 2011 at 10:15 A.M., weighing 8 lbs. 14 oz.

John and Sonya Post (nee Pieffers)

Deanna, Leah, Ethan, Kaileigh

Caleb is named after his Grandpa Pieffers

7th grandchild for E. John and Ena Post

24th grandchild for Henry and Christine Pieffers

7260 County Road 7, RR 1, Alma, ON N0B 1A0

WEDDINGS

With thankfulness to our Heavenly Father who has guided our lives and brought us together, we

PHIL NUMAN

and

JANNA VEENENDAAL

Together with our parents, Jelte and Jannie Numan and Bert and Agatha Veenendaal wish to announce our Wedding which will take place, the Lord willing, on Saturday the 10th of March 2012 in the Free Reformed Church of Byford, commencing at 11 am.

Reverend W. VanderJagt officiating.

Please join us for a light lunch after the ceremony.